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Mr. *Fitch's*

# SERMONS

On Occasion of the fatal Distemper which has prevail'd in sundry Towns within the Province of

*New-Hampshire.*



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# Two SERMONS,

On Occasion of the

## Fatal Distemper

Which prevail'd in sundry Towns within  
the Province of *New-Hampshire*.

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By *Jabez Fitch*,

Minister of the Gospel at *Portsmouth*.

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Hos. 6. 1.

*Come and let us return unto the Lord, for He hath  
torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and  
he will bind us up.*

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B O S T O N :

Printed for *Eleazer Russel* in *Portsmouth*.

1736.





## To the READER.

**T** *IS a common Observation of Divines, that however it may fare with some particular Persons, yet as the generality of a People are, so they may expect to fare in respect of the Dispensations of God's Providence towards them. If they are with God in ways of Duty, He will be with them in ways of Mercy; but if they forsake Him, He will forsake them; and then they lie open to all manner of Woes. But how long God will bear with a sinful People, it is not for us to determine: We ought not to judge of the Divine Patience by our own. If God had no more Patience to bear with provoking Sinners, than we have to bear with any Provocations that are offered to us, we should long ago have been destroy'd from being a People; but the Lord is God and not Man, and therefore it is that we are not destroy'd.* Our

Our Iniquities testify against us; *for they are numerous and heinous, and God has been calling us to Repentance by the still Voice of his Word; and it ought not to be forgotten, how he call'd to us to Repentance (some Tears ago) by the loud Voice of his Providence, in the terrible Earthquake wherewith the whole Country was alarm'd; and God has since been waiting to see if we would bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance; but alas! how little of these Fruits have been to be found among us? Now, the Exercise of God's Patience is not everlasting, but his abused Patience will at length turn into Fury; we have therefore no Reason to wonder at the last awful Calamity which He has inflicted on us.*

*We must acknowledge that He is just in all the Evil that He has brought upon us; He has done right, but we have done wickedly; and He has, as yet, punished us far less than our Iniquities have deserved. How far He may proceed in his judicial Dispensations we know not; for his Anger is not turned away, but his Hand is stretched out still in sundry Places; and the Reason is evident; for the People turneth not unto him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the Lord of Hosts*

*in a right Manner : And if God should say of such a People, Why should ye be stricken any more ? ye will revolt more and more ; and should in a way of righteous Judgment cease to correct them who have been long incorrigible, and whom therefore He designs to destroy, how doleful and desperate would their Condition be ? It concerns us all to awake to Righteousness and Sin no more, lest this should be our Condition.*

*Sometimes a small Number of penitent, pious Souls may stand in the Gap, to turn away God's Wrath ; But if God's Wrath comes on a sinful People, these pious ones shall either be deliver'd from the common Calamity, or comforted under it : And tho' the Good may be involv'd with the Bad in the same common Calamities, and one Event may happen to both ; yet far be it from God that the Righteous should be as the Wicked. Common Calamities are quite another Thing to the Righteous, than they are to the Wicked ; for they shall be supported under them, and their Afflictions shall be sanctified to them for the good of their Souls ; for, all things shall work together for Good, to them that love God.*

*The brief Sermons here emitted, were preached last Winter, on Occasion of the fatal Distemper in the Throat, that then prevailed in sundry Towns, and that Distemper having since spread into other Parts, and it remaining still in some measure where it first began; I thought that the publishing of these plain Discourses (such as they are) might possibly be useful to some Persons under their present distressing Circumstances, and might serve to keep up the Memory of that awful Calamity which ought never to be forgotten, and excite us to a due Improvement thereof: That these good Ends may be attained, is my hearty Prayer,*

Portsmouth,  
August 13.  
1736.

Jabez Fitch.

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# The first S E R M O N.

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Jeremiah XIV. 8, 9.

*O the Hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of Trouble, why shouldest thou be as a Stranger in the Land, and as a Way-faring Man, that turneth aside to tarry for a Night? Why shouldest thou be as a Man astonied, as a mighty Man that cannot save? —*

**T**HIS Chapter was pen'd on Occasion of a grievous Drought, which the Prophet gives a melancholy Description of, from the first Verse to the sixth; and then he addresses himself to God by humble and earnest Prayer, for the removal of that Calamity.

In the *seventh* Verse the Prophet confesses their unworthiness and ill-deservings, and implores the free Mercy of God for the taking away that grievous Judgment: *O Lord, tho' our Iniquities testify against us, do thou it for thy Names sake; for our Backslidings are many, we have sinned, against thee. When we seek to God for the preventing or removing of any Judgment, we must acknowledge*

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that we deserve it, and far worse: Our Iniquities witness against us, and we cannot deny the Charge; our Backslidings are too many to be conceal'd, and our revolts too heinous to be excus'd. All our Hope must be in the free Mercy of God: *Do it for thy Names sake, for thy Mercy's sake; let thy Mercy be magnified in our Deliverance.*

In the Words design'd for our present Consideration, the Prophet addresses himself to God, as *the Hope of Israel, and the Saviour thereof in time of Trouble*, and humbly enquires why God appear'd unconcern'd for his People; *why shouldst thou be as a Stranger in the Land, and as a Way-faring Man, that turneth aside to tarry for a Night? And why He seem'd incapable of affording them Succour; Why shouldst thou be as a Man astonied, as a mighty Man that cannot save?*

We may observe (1) That, it is sometimes a time of Trouble, even of great Trouble with God's People. (2) They should then address themselves to God, as *the Hope of Israel, and Saviour thereof in time of Trouble.* (3) God sometimes carries it towards his People, as a Stranger in the Land, and as a Way-faring Man, that turneth aside to tarry for a Night, and He seems as a Man astonish'd, and as a mighty Man that cannot save; and when it is so with them, they should humbly enquire into the Reason hereof.

1. We may observe, that 'tis sometimes a Time of Trouble, even of great Trouble with God's People. Such was the Trouble referr'd to in our Text. *Man that is born of a Woman is of few Days, and full*

full of Trouble. Being born in Sin He is born to Trouble, as the Sparks fly upward. And God's People have their Share of Trouble with other Men, and sometimes a greater Share of Trouble than others: *Waters of a full Cup are wrung out to them, and they are made to drink deep of the bitter Cup of Affliction. But Affliction does not come forth of the Dust, neither doth Trouble spring out of the Ground: 'Tis not to be ascrib'd to Chance, or second Causes; but God is the Author of all the Troubles and Afflictions that his People meet withal. Is there any evil of Affliction in a City, and the Lord hath not done it? He challenges it as his Prerogative, to form the Light and create Darkness, to make Peace and create Evil; I the Lord do all these things. Now He does not willingly grieve nor afflict the Children of Men, much less his own Children or People, but He does it for his own Glory, and the Good of his People.*

1. *He does it for his own Glory, for the Glory of his Holiness. He sends Troubles upon his People to testify his Displeasure against their Sins: For God will not be fondly indulgent to his People, if they go on in ways of Sin; but He will visit their Transgressions with the Rod, and their Iniquities with Stripes: Yea, He said of his ancient People, You only have I known of all the Families of the Earth; therefore will I punish you for all your Iniquities, Amos 3. 2.*

And God sometimes visits his People with great Trouble, that his Power and Mercy may more eminently shine forth in their Deliverances, as is said, *In the Mount of the Lord it shall be seen, Gen.*

22. 14. God is often seen in the Mount, or in the greatest Perplexities of his People, wherein He not only manifests, but magnifies his Power and Mercy in their Deliverance.

2. *The Troubles which God sends on his People, serve for the promoting their best Good.* The Evil of Affliction serves for the Cure of a far greater Evil, namely that of Sin: *By this shall the Iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the Fruit to take away his Sin,* Isa. 27. 9.

The Troubles they meet with serve to cure them of an *over-sord Love* of the World, and hereby, as the Psalmist says of himself, *Psal. 131. 2.* They become *as a weaned Child* from the admired Vanities of this World.

And they serve to quicken a Spirit of Prayer; Hence 'tis said, *In their Affliction they will seek me early,* Hos. 5. 15. and in *Isa. 26. 16.* *Lord, in Trouble have they visited thee, they poured out a Prayer, when thy Chastening was upon them.*

I proceed,

Secondly, to observe, that in a Time of Trouble God's People should address themselves to Him, as the Hope of Israel, and the Saviour thereof in time of Trouble.

We may here take Notice,

1. That God is the Hope of Israel, and the Saviour thereof in time of Trouble, that is, He is the just object of the Hope of his People, and they have abun-

abundant Reason to hope in Him, as their al-sufficient Saviour in all their times of Trouble.

He is *the just object of their Hope* in all times of Trouble; for He is able and ready to succour them.

*He is able to succour them* in the most difficult Cases. Tho' our Case may be desperate in respect of our selves, yet it can never be desperate in respect of God. Many things are too hard for us, but *there is nothing too hard for God*. And He is *very pitiful and of tender Mercy*, He is full of Bowels, as the Word signifies. *In all the Afflictions of his People, He is afflicted, and his Soul is said to be griev'd for the Misery of Israel*; and he has invited his People to call upon Him in the Day of Trouble, and He will deliver them in his good time. On these Accounts God is the just object of the Hope of his People in all their times of Trouble.

And they have abundant Reason to hope in Him, as their al-sufficient Saviour in time of Trouble. *He that is their God is the God of Salvation, and unto God the Lord belong the Issues from Death*. He can deliver them out of the very Jaws of Death; and He has many a time shew'd Himself an al-sufficient Saviour to his People in the time of their Extremity; they have therefore great Reason to hope and confide in Him as such, in and under their greatest Difficulties; and 'tis good both to hope and quietly to wait for the Salvation of the Lord.

2. God's People, even in a time of greatest Trouble, should (after the Example of the Prophet in our Text) address themselves to God, as the Hope of Israel

*Israel and Saviour thereof in time of Trouble.*

They should under the forest Calamities cherish Hope in God, and apply themselves to Him with Hopes of Succour and Relief from Him. When they are ready to be dejected and disquieted within themselves, they should check themselves, as the Psalmist did, *Why art thou cast down, O my Soul, why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God.* And the Psalmist often professes his Hope in God, *Thou art my Hope, O Lord God; in thee, O Lord, do I hope; what wait I for, my Hope is in thee;* and He saith, *Let Israel hope in the Lord.* There is indeed no Duty in all the Book of God more inculcated upon us, than that of hoping and trusting in God. And we should under the most distressing Circumstances address our selves to God with hopes of Audience, saying with the Prophet, *Jer. 17. 14. Thou art my Hope in the Day of Evil.* The want of this Hope under any Circumstances, is dishonourable and displeasing to God; but God is said to take Pleasure in them that hope in his Mercy: He is greatly pleas'd when we address our selves to Him with hopes of finding Mercy in Him: This must needs be highly pleasing to Him, as it tends to the Glory of that attribute which He most glories in.

And as God is an al-sufficient Saviour, that is able to help and save his People in the most difficult and desperate Cases, they ought to address Him, with a lively Hope in the greatest Straits and Extremities, as the Psalmist did, when all Refuge failed him, he cried to the Lord and said, *Thou art my Refuge, and my Portion in the Land*  
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*of the Living.* God is greatly glorified by the Exercise of such a Hope in him; and when his People address him, as the sole object of their Hope, saying with the Psalmist, *Give us help from Trouble, for vain is the help of Man,* and as the Prophet says in Jer. 3. 23. *Truly in vain is Salvation hoped for from the Hills, and from the Multitude of Mountains; Truly in the Lord our God is the Salvation of Israel.* We must disclaim all Creature Confidences, hoping in God alone to succour and save us; for no Creature can afford us any Relief, but as God impowers and enables it.

For the Improvement of what has been now said.

*Let us then in all our times of Trouble address ourselves to God, as the Hope of Israel, and Saviour thereof in time of Trouble.* This is the indispensable Duty of God's People, and they have sufficient Encouragement to practice accordingly.

I shall here endeavour to answer an important Question, viz. *What we shall do, that we may have a well grounded Hope in God, as our Saviour in all our times of Trouble?* I answer,

I. *Let us reflect on our selves, as the procuring Cause of all our Troubles, and let us humble our Souls under the mighty Hand of God. Remembring mine Affliction, and my Misery,* says the Prophet, in the Name of the People of God: It may be read, *My Affliction; and my Transgression, my Trouble and my Sin,* that brought it upon me: That was the *Wormwood and the Gall in the Affliction; My Soul hath them still*  
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*in Remembrance, and is humbled in me, Lam. 3. 19, 20.* It becomes us to have humble Hearts under humbling Providences: *This I recal to my Mind,* says the Prophet in the next Verse; *therefore have I Hope.* Those that are truly humbled under the mighty Hand of God, may hope that he will *exalt* or deliver them *in due time*: And 'tis said in Verse 29th of that Chapter, *He putteth his Mouth in the Dust, if so be there may be Hope.* We must not only lay our Hand upon our Mouth in Token of submission to the Will of God, but put our Mouth in the Dust in Token of Sorrow and Shame and Self-loathing, at the Remembrance of our Sins. If there be any way to acquire and secure a good Hope under Affliction, 'tis this Way.

2. *Let us make diligent Search for our Sins,* as *Joshua* did for the accursed thing, and when he had discover'd the Criminal that had taken of the accursed thing, namely *Achan*, he stoned him to Death, and the Valley wherein he was stoned was call'd, *The Valley of Achor*, which signifies the Valley of Trouble, because he had troubled *Israel*, and there God troubled him, as you may read in the 7th Chapter of *Joshua*. Now, Sin is the accursed thing, which we must diligently search for, and when we have found it, we must put away that accursed thing, and by mortifying Sin, we must Stone the *Achan* that has troubled us. And 'tis said, *I will give the Valley of Achor for a Door of Hope,* *Hos. 2. 15.* that is, the Valley of Trouble shall open a Door of Hope, which must be understood

flood of sincere hearty Trouble for Sin, when our Hearts are so broken for Sin, as to be broken off from it, when we are so troubled for our Sin, as to set our selves to mortify and destroy all our Lusts, we may then hope in the Mercy of God that he will pity us and pardon us, and be our Saviour in the time of Trouble.

3. God is said to *take Pleasure in them that fear him, and hope in his Mercy*, Plal. 147. 11. We must therefore have the Fear of God in our Hearts, if we would have a well-grounded Hope in his Mercy. A holy Fear of God and Hope in God not only may consist or stand together, but they must concur and go together. Even in the same Heart, and at the same time, there must be a reverence of his Majesty, and a reliance on his Mercy. Our Fear must keep our Hope from swelling into Presumption, and our Hope must save our Fear from sinking into Despair. 'Tis said, *Ye that fear the Lord, trust in the Lord; he is their Help and their Shield*, Psal. 115. 11. Where there is an awful Fear of God, there may be a humble Hope and Confidence in him, that he will be their Help and Shield. If we so fear the Lord, as to depart from all Evil, we may hope that he will be our all-sufficient Saviour in all times of Trouble. Yea, if we fear the Lord as we ought, we need not be afraid of any thing else, but may sing the 46th Psalm; *God is our Refuge and Strength, a very present Help in Trouble; therefore will we not fear, tho' the Earth be removed, &c.*

4. *If we would have a well grounded Hope of God's Salvation, we must set our selves to keep his Commandments. Lord, I have hoped in thy Salvation, and done thy Commandments, saith the Psalmist, Psal. 119. 166.* God has joyned these two together, and let no Man put them asunder. For, we cannot upon good Grounds hope for God's Salvation temporal or eternal, unless we sincerely endeavour to do his Commandments; and if we sincerely set our selves to discharge our Duty in all regards, and make it our great and constant Care to *walk in all his Commandments, and in all his Ordinances blameless,* we may then cast all our Care upon God, hoping in his Mercy that he will take Care of us, to save us from falling into Trouble, or he will save us from the sting of Trouble, that whatever Trouble befalls us, there shall be no real Evil in it, but it shall be over-ruled for our Good; and God will deliver us out of our Troubles in his good time.

I shall now make Application of what we have heard to the present Circumstances of our Land.

It has been a time of sore Trouble in regard of the mortal Sicknes, that has prevail'd in sundry Parts; and also among our selves, tho' not to that Degree, that it has in some other Places, which we ought to acknowledge with humble and hearty Thankfulness; but considering our manifold Sins and Provocations, we have Reason to say, *Our Flesh trembles for Fear of thee, and we are afraid of thy Judgments;* and it concerns us deeply to humble our Souls under the mighty Hand of God, that is lifted up, and has fallen so heavily on sundry Neighbouring Towns.

1. *Let*

1. *Let us take notice of the Hand of God in bringing this Distemper among us* For, all Diseases are his Servants, they go and come at his Command, and do what he bids them; as the Centurian said with respect to his Souldiers and Servants; *I say to this Man go, and he goeth, and to another come, and he cometh, and to my Servant, do this, and he doeth it.* The Design of the Centurian in these Words, was to express his Faith in the Power of Christ; he believ'd that all Diseases were at his Beck and Command, they seize us when he sends them, and leave us when he calls them back.

2. *Let us reflect on our Sins, as the procuring Cause of Sickness.* It is for the Sin and Disobedience of a People that God brings any Epidemical Disease upon them; For he promised his ancient People, that if they would hearken to his Voice, and do that which was right in his sight, if they would give ear to his Commandments and keep his Statutes, he would put none of those Diseases upon them, which he brought upon the Egyptians, Exod. 15. 26. But in case they were disobedient and rebellious, he threatned to send Epidemical Diseases upon them, as in Lev. 26. 16. *I will appoint over you Terror*, which may signify some terrible Disease, and *Consumption*, which may intend all chronical Diseases, and *the burning Ague* or *Feaver*, which may intend all acute Diseases; God will appoint these as Taskmasters over a sinful People, to rule them with rigour. Hence all epidemical Diseases should lead us to reflect upon Sin, as the procuring Cause thereof, and should raise in us a just Indignation against Sin. The

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Abounding of Iniquity among a People exposes them to an Inundation of Judgments; and the awful Calamity which sundry Places are groaning under, should lead us to consider, that we have been *a sinful People and laden with Iniquity*. We should lament the crying Sins of the times wherein we live, and should each one of us reflect on himself, saying, *What have I done?* and every one should be concerned to mend one.

3. *If there were a general Repentance and Reformation of all provoking Evils*, we might then with a well-grounded Hope address our selves to God that he would appear for the Help and Relief of his People under the sore Trouble, that he has brought upon them, and take away that grievous Sickness that has so far prevailed in this Land. For, this is what God has promised to a penitent People, and faithful is he that has promised. *At what Instant I shall speak concerning a Nation or People, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; If that Nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their Evil, I will repent of the Evil that I thought to do unto them, Jer. 18. 7, 8.* When God is coming forth against a People in ways of Judgment, a general Repentance will stop the Progress of the Judgment. If the Body of the People of this Land would hearken to that Exhortation of the Prophet, *Hos. 6. 1. Come and let us return unto the Lord*, they might then upon sure Grounds hope that he would make good his Word unto them, in the following part of the Verse, *For he hath torn, and he will heal us, he hath smitten, and he*

*he will bind us up:* And as he hath been pleased to assume it among his gracious Titles, that he is *the Lord that healeth his People*; so he will send his *Word and heal the Sickness* that prevails among a penitent People; for God has not assum'd that Title to himself in vain, but he will certainly make it good to a People, that by a true Repentance and Reformation are qualify'd for such a Mercy.

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# The second S E R M O N

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Jeremiah XIV. 8, 9.

*O the Hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of Trouble, why shouldest thou be as a Stranger in the Land, and as a Way-faring Man, that turneth aside to tarry for a Night? Why shouldest thou be as a Man astonied, as a mighty Man that cannot save? —*

**W**E have observ'd from these Words,

*First*, That 'tis sometimes a time of Trouble, even of great Trouble with God's People.

*Secondly*, They should then address to God as the Hope of Israel and Saviour thereof in time of Trouble.

*Thirdly*, We may observe, that God sometimes carries it towards his People, as a Stranger in the Land, and as a Way-faring Man that turneth aside to tarry for a Night, and he seems as a Man astonish'd,  
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and as a mighty Man that cannot save; and when it is so with them, they should humbly enquire into the Reason hereof, and beg of God to assist them in the Enquiry. Thus much is imply'd when 'tis said, *Why shouldest thou be as a Stranger in the Land, and as a Way-faring Man that turneth aside to tarry for a Night? Why shouldest thou be as a Man astonied, as a mighty Man that cannot save?*

1. God sometimes carries it towards his People; as a Stranger in the Land, and as a Way-faring Man that turneth aside to tarry for a Night.

1. *He carries it as a Stranger in the Land.*

1. *He appears unconcern'd for his People; as a Stranger in the Land is not concern'd for the Interest of the Place where he is, so God sometimes appears unconcern'd for the Interest and Welfare of his People; he does not take Care to prevent the Calamities to which they are expos'd, nor to remove those Calamities which have befallen them. He appears as tho' he cared not what became of his People; so Christ was asleep when his Disciples were in a Storm, and they awoke him, saying, Master, carest thou not that we perish? Their God and Saviour hides himself from them, as in Isa. 45. 15 Verily, thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel the Saviour. He seems to neglect his People and suspends his wonted Favours.*

2. God may be said to be as a Stranger in the Land, in regard of his strange judicial Dispensations towards

wards his People; when he rises up as in *Mount Perazim*, and is wroth as in the *Valley of Gibeon* that he may do his *Work*, his *strange Work*; and bring to pass his *Act*, his *strange Act*, *Isa. 28. 21.* The Prophet here threatens that God would do against his People what he formerly did against their Enemies; whereby his impartial Justice would appear; he would rise up against *Jerusalem*, as in *David's* time against the *Philistines* in *Mount Perazim*, and as in *Joshua's* time against the *Canaanites* in the *Valley of Gibeon*: If those that profess themselves God's People become like *Philistines* and *Canaanites*, they may justly expect to be treated as such. Now God may then be said to do his *strange Work*, and to bring to pass his *strange Act*; for this is a Work that he is not accustomed to, with respect to his own People, but he uses to protect and favour them; 'tis therefore a *strange Work*, if he turns to be their Enemy, and fights against them in his providential Dispensations, *Isa. 63. 10.* And the Word *Stranger* is used for an Enemy in the Old Testament, because those that were Strangers to *Israel* were wont to be Enemies to them: So the Word is used *Isa. 1. 7.* *Your Land, Strangers*, that is, Enemies devour in your presence, and it is desolate as overthrown by Strangers. And in *Psal. 144. 7.* the Psalmist prays, *Deliver me out of the hand of strange Children*, or out of the hand of Strangers, that is, out of the hand of mine Enemies.

Now, when God carries it thus strangely towards his People, they should humbly enquire into the Reason hereof; Why shouldest thou be as a Stranger in the Land?

*Land ? They should be concern'd to find out the blameable Cause hereof, which is intirely in themselves, and should beg of God to discover it to them.*

We may here take Notice,

1. *When God as a Stranger in the Land, appears unconcern'd for the Interest and Welfare of his People, the true Cause hereof is, because they have been unconcern'd for the Honour of God. God has joined his Honour and our Welfare together. Every one that feareth and honoureth the Lord shall be happy, and it shall be well with him, Psal. 128. 1, 2. God has formed us for himself, that we should shew forth his Praise ; and we should make it our chief End and Design to honour and glorify God ; but when this is neglected by the Generality of a People, and they have other Ends and Designs which they are in pursuit of more than this, as namely, how they may attain the Profits, Pleasures, and Honours of this World, if they are thus regardless of God's Honour, they have no Reason to expect that he will take Care of their Welfare.*

2. *When God's professing People are estranged from him, and indulge themselves in strange Sins, this will cause him to be, as a Stranger in the Land, unconcern'd for such a People, and to inflict strange Judgments upon them. When a People have estranged themselves from God, as is said of the House of Israel, They are all estranged from me thro' their Idols, Ezek. 14. 5. When the Hearts of Men are estranged*  
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from God thro' some Idol or other, when some Creature has gain'd that Place and Dominion in the Heart which God should have; and the Generality of a People are thus estranged from God, 'tis no Wonder that he shews himself as a Stranger in the Land: When a People are *estranged from the Life of God*, as the Apostle says of the Gentiles; and tho' God *has written to them the great things of his Law, they are counted as a strange or foreign thing*, Hof. 8. 12. as things of no Concernment to them, things that they have nothing to do with, and were not to be govern'd by. When those that had *been planted a noble Vine*, are turn'd into the degenerate Plant of a strange Vine, Jer. 2. 21. When *their Vine is as the Vine of Sodom*, Deut. 32. 32. and their Fruits are very offensive to God, *bitter as Gall*. When strange Sins are perpetrated among a People, when they are grown to a strange height of Wickedness, even to be *over-much Wicked*, as the wise Man speaks, Eccles. 7. 17. This will cause the Lord to be as a Stranger in the Land, unconcern'd for the Welfare of such a People, and to send strange Judgments upon them: God has reserv'd a *strange Punishment* for such *Workers of Iniquity*, Job 31. 3.

Let us make Application of what we have now heard to the doleful Circumstances of the People of this Land.

*Has not God been as a Stranger in our Land? Has he not appear'd unconcern'd for the Welfare of his People in sundry parts of the Land, whom he has visited with a strange, unusual Distemper, whereby many of the Children of his People have been cut off from the Land of the Living? Let us consider, whether we have not been shamefully unconcern'd for the Honour of God: And tho' we have own'd him for our Father and Master, yet alas, how little Honour*

nour and Fear has he had from us ! What occasion have the Generality of the People of this Land given for that Expostulation, in *Mal. 1. 6. If I be a Father, where is mine Honour ? and if I be a Master, where is my Fear ? saith the Lord of Hosts.* And if we have been so little concern'd for the Honour of God, we need not wonder that he has appear'd so unconcern'd for our Welfare. Have not the People of this Land greatly estranged themselves from God ? We may then justly expect that he should be as a Stranger in our Land. Have we not been guilty of *strange Sins and Provocations*, whereby we have expos'd our selves to the *strange Judgment* that has befallen us ? Have we not *provok'd the Lord to Anger by strange Vanities* ? as the Prophet speaks in *Jer. 8. 19.* Have we not inordinately lov'd the Vanities of this World, and have not our Hearts been *strangely lifted up to these Vanities* ? Have not many *strangely neglected the great Salvation*, and rejected the Counsel of God against themselves ? Have not many Professors of Religion *strangely contradicted their Profession in their Lives*, giving Occasion to have the Ways of Religion evil spoken of by the prophane World ? Have not many been *strangely addicted*, some to one Vice and some to another ? Some to Pride, some to Envy, some to Malice, some to Covetousness, some to Sensuality, some to Evil-speaking, and the like.

Now the Way to be deliver'd from the *strange Judgment* that has prevail'd among us, and to escape the like Judgments for the future, is, to search and try our Ways, and soundly to repent of our *strange Sins and Provocations.*

I proceed,

*Secondly*, to consider that God sometimes carries it towards his People, as a *Way-faring Man that turneth aside to tarry for a Night.* This may intend the same

thing with the former: As a Way-faring Man that turneth aside to tarry for a Night in an Inn, does not enquire into the Affairs of the Family, nor is in any Care about it; so God sometimes appears unconcern'd about his People, and as taking no Care of their Welfare.

But we may here further take Notice, that as a Way-faring Man tarries but for a Night in a Place, and then is gone; so God sometimes departs from his People in respect of his favourable Presence: He does not favour and protect them, but leaves them unto grievous Judgments and Calamities: For *wo unto a People when the Lord departs from them*, Hos. 9. 12. Those are in a woful Condition indeed from whom the Lord departs: Our Weal or Wo depends upon our having or not having the favourable Presence of God: If he goes from us all Weal goes with him, and we become expos'd to all manner of Woes. In the Verse now cited, 'tis said in the Beginning of the Verse, *Tho' they bring up their Children, yet will I bereave them, that there shall not be a Man left*, then it follows, *Yea, wo also to them, when I depart from them*. God threatens to bereave them of their Children, which has in an awful Measure been verif'd in sundry Places of this Land, and we know not how far this awful Judgment may proceed: We have Reason to say, *Our Flesh trembles for Fear of thee, and we are afraid of thy Judgments*; For, if God departs from a People they lie open to all sorts of Judgments, to distressing and to desolating Judgments. Hence 'tis said in Jer. 6. 8. *Be instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my Soul depart from thee; lest I make thee desolate, a Land not inhabited*. The God of Mercy is loth to depart even from a provoking People, and is earnest with them, by true Repentance and Reformation to prevent his departing from them; for if

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he be once departed from them they are liable to *desolating* Judgments, to become *desolate*, a Land not inhabited.

Now when God is in any measure departed from a People, it concerns them humbly to enquire into the Reason hereof, when he is as a Way-faring Man that tarryes but for a Night, and then leaves a Place, they should humbly enquire, *Why shouldest thou be as a Way-faring Man that turneth aside to tarry for a Night, and then is gone?*

Now the true Reason of God's departing from a People is their departing from him. Hence the Prophet says in 2 Chron. 15. 2. *Hear ye me, Asa and all Judah and Benjamin, the Lord is with you while ye be with him, and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you.*

I shall here shew when a People may be said to forsake God, or depart from him.

As the Children of Israel were said to forsake God, when they set up other Gods, so a People may be said to forsake God, when they make an Idol of the World. We cannot serve God and Mammon: Those that are Servants of Mammon, that is, of the World, that make it their chief care and concern to gain the World, that pour out the Strength of their Affections on worldly Objects, they may be said to depart from God; for they make a God of the World.

And those that put that Trust and Confidence in any Creature that is due to God alone, are guilty of departing from God, and expose themselves to the Curse of God: For thus saith the Lord, *Cursed be the Man that trusteth in Man, and maketh Flesh his Arm, whose Heart departeth from the Lord,* Jer. 17. 5. A-

Again; we may be said to depart from the Lord, when we *disregard his holy Ordinances*, as is charged upon them in *Isa. 65. 11. Ye are they that forsake the Lord, that forget my holy Mountain*; so that to forget the holy Mountain, that is, to slight and neglect Divine Worship and Ordinances is a forsaking of the Lord, and so far as a People are guilty hereof, they are guilty of departing from the Lord.

Again, Men may be said to depart from the Lord when they are of a *vicious Conversation*, and indulge themselves in *vile, abominable Lusts*, when they forsake the Law of God, and walk after the *Imagination of their own Hearts*, *Jer. 9. 13. When they set up their corrupt Wills in Competition with and Contradiction to the holy Will of God*, and will do as they please, whatever God and Conscience say to the contrary; when instead of walking in the Ways of God, they walk in the Ways of Pride, Sensuality, Unrighteousness, and such like Enormity.

To apply what we have now heard, *Let us search and try our Ways, and duly consider whereinsoever we have departed from God, and given him Occasion to depart from us. Let us be deeply humbled for all our Departures from him: so far as we have been guilty of Idolizing the World, or placing an undue Confidence in any Creature, so far as we have been guilty of neglecting the Divine Worship and Ordinances, and so far as we have indulged our selves in any Lust, the Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eye, or the Pride of Life; Let us abhor our selves in Dust and Ashes, in Consideration of our Departures from God in these and the like Instances; and let us speedily return unto him; for they that are far from him must needs perish, they are expos'd to all sorts of temporal Woes, and to eternal Perdition. Let us take heed of an evil*  
*Hears*

*Heart of unbelief in departing from the living God, and let us above all things dread and deprecate God's departing from us, which will be the fatal Consequent of our departing from him; if we forsake him, he will forsake us, and then our Case will be woful beyond Expression; so far therefore as we have departed from God in any regard, let us return to him, and then we may rest assur'd that he will return to us; for so has he promis'd in Mal. 3. 7. Return unto me, and I will return unto you. If we return unto God and to our Duty, he will return to us in Mercy, and will remove the Judgments we are under, and prevent those we fear.*

I proceed,

*Secondly, to consider that God sometimes seems as tho' he were incapable of helping and relieving his People under their Troubles; he seems as a Man astonied, as a mighty Man that cannot save.*

1. God sometimes seems as a Man astonied; *Why shouldest thou be as a Man astonied?* This can't be taken in a proper sense; for how inconsistent is it with the infinite Perfection of God, that he should be as a Man astonish'd; this is therefore spoken of God after the manner of Men. As a Man astonish'd, though he has the Reason of a Man, yet being astonish'd, he is quite at a Loss and at his wit's End: Now though this can never be suppos'd of a God of infinite Wisdom and Understanding, yet he may sometimes seem to be as a Man astonish'd, as tho' he were at a Loss what to do for the Relief of his People. God's People are sometimes in such a Condition that they know not what to do, they are so astonish'd that they can't think what Course to take for their Relief, and when they apply themselves to God, he delays helping them, as though he were like a Man astonish'd that knew

knew not what to do for them under their difficult and deplorable Circumstances. But when such astonishing Things befall us, that *we know not what to do*, we should have *our Eyes upon the Lord*, as one who is never at a Loss what to do, 2 Chron. 20. 12. And God may be said to be *as a Man astonished*, in regard of his *astonishing Dispensations*: Astonishing Providences sometimes befall God's People, as the Psalmist says in Psal. 60. 3. *Thou hast shew'd thy People hard things, thou hast made us to drink the Wine of astonishment.* Astonishing Calamities of various sorts may befall them, and in particular *astonishing Diseases*, as has been of late in several Places in this Land, and God has suffer'd the Disease to prevail to such a Degree, as has given just Occasion of bewailing it in the Words of the Prophet, Jer. 8. 21, 22. *For the hurt of the Daughter of my People am I hurt; astonishment hath taken hold of me: Is there no Balm in Gilead? Is there no Physician there? Why then is not the Health of the Daughter of my People recovered.*

Now, it concerns us humbly to enquire into the Reason hereof, *Why shouldest thou be as a Man astonished?* and the true Reason hereof is the *astonishing Sins of many*, Jer. 2. 12, 13. *Be astonish'd, O ye Heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, Heaven itself is here call'd upon to stand amaz'd; for my People have committed two Evils; they have forsaken me the Fountain of living Waters, and hewed them out Cisterns, broken Cisterns that can hold no Water.* How astonishing is the Sin and Folly of such as forsake the Fountain of living Waters, or God, who is the only Fountain of true Felicity, and hew out unto themselves the broken Cisterns of Creature-Comforts, and place their Happiness in those things that can hold no Water of true Satisfaction. And may not this be justly charg'd upon many in this Land? We read that holy Ezra sat  
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*down astonied at the Sin of some in his time, Ezra 9 4. And if the holy God were capable of the same Passions that we are, he would be astonish'd at the Sins of many Persons.*

We have Reason to be astonish'd at the Prophaness and Immoralities of many in these times, and where such *astonishing Sins* and Provocations are to be found among a People, they hereby expose themselves to the *astonishing Judgments* of God, and he may justly render their Plagues wonderful, as he threatned his ancient People, *Deut. 28. 58, 59. If thou wilt not observe to do all the Words of this Law that are written in this Book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful Name, THE LORD THY GOD; then the Lord will make thy Plagues wonderful, and the Plagues of thy Seed, even great Plagues, and of long continuance, and sore Sickneses, and of long continuance. And tho' a People under such astonishing Calamities, may cry to God in their Distress, yet unless their Supplications be joined with Reformation, 'tis no wonder if God appears as a Man astonied, that is incapable of giving them any Relief.*

2 *God sometimes seems as a mighty Man that cannot save. Tho' all things are possible with God, and if he will work, who or what shall let? There is nothing too hard, or hard at all for him; yet as a mighty Man may not be able to help in some difficult Cases, because tho' he be mighty, yet he is but a Man; and therefore his Power is limited and is not sufficient in all Cases; so the Omnipotent*  
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God may sometimes seem *as a mighty Man that cannot save*. When his People are under distressing Circumstances and cry to him for Succour, he may deny it to them, as tho' he could not save them.

Now, when it is so with a People, it concerns them humbly to enquire into the Reason hereof; and that is not the want of Power in God, but their Iniquities and Sins, which causes him to suspend the exalting of his Power in their behalf, as is said in *Isa. 59. 1, 2* *'Behold the Lord's Hand is not shorten'd, that it cannot save, neither his Ear heavy, that it cannot hear; but your Iniquities have seperated between you and your God, and your Sins have hid his Face from you, that he will not hear. The Lord's Hand is not shorten'd, his Power is never at all straiten'd, but the Iniquities of a People are a Partition Wall between them and their God, and hinder him from putting forth his Power and stretching out his Hand for their Relief, and their Sins hide his Face from them, they provoke him to withdraw his gracious Presence, and to suspend the Instances of his Help. 'Tis said in Mark 6. 5, 6. Christ could do no mighty Work; because of their unbelief. By Unbelief and other Sins Men stop the Current of Divine Favours, and do as it were tie the Hands of Omnipotence itself.*

But let a People break off their Sins by a true Repentance and Reformation, and the Almighty God will not seem, as if he were  
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no more than a mighty Man that cannot save;  
 but he who is the Hope of Israel and the Savi-  
 our thereof in time of Trouble, will shew himself  
 an all-sufficient Saviour to them.

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